

History of the Peninsula Belgian-American Club

The Peninsula Belgian-American Club was started for the first time on July 6, 1964. Officers were Kenneth DeDecker, President; Harry Swoboda, Vice President; Wallace Charles, Secretary; and Leonard Lampereur, Treasurer. After a period of time the group became inactive.

In 1968, several people approached Harry Chaudoir about re-organizing the club. Officers for this newly formed club were Har Chaudoir, President; Austin Allard, Vice President; Laurence Chaudoir, Secretary; and Leonard Lampereur, Treasurer. The club began their first year with 12 to 20 members with the purpose of honoring their forefathers, to salute their efforts and recreate that in history when good fellowship was prime, to promote social and charitable functions, and to communicate and assist all incorporated Belgian Clubs that included Canada and Belgium.

Other people who filled the position of Secretary after Laurence Chaudoir were Irene Conard, Grace Lemense and Mary Ann Defnet. After Leonard Lampereur, the position of Secretary and Treasurer was combined and filled by Elmer DeDecker in 1977. After Austin Allard passed away, Louis DeJardin and then James Lampereur filled the position of Vice President.

In 1972 Harry met Dr. Joseph Binard, a doctor in Manitowoc and with his help, the first trip to Belgium was started. At that time they had about 150 members in the club. During their first trip they ended up in the Flemish area of Belgium. Of course, their Walloon friends wanted to know why they were not staying with them. So, in 1974 with the help of Lucien Leonard of Namur, Belgium the club went on their second trip to Namur. The Walloon people were overjoyed to see them and they were all excited about meeting their relatives for the first time. They had about 170 members on this trip that was organized by Austin Allard and Harry Chaudoir. Their number increased to 180 for the 1976 tour.

The Peninsula Belgian-American Club members went to Belgium in 1972 and 1974. The Belgians started coming to the U.S. for the first time in 1975 with approximately 200 people, making it necessary for them to travel on two planes. Mr. Lucien Leonard was the first President of the Wisconsin-Wallonie Club. He also organized the trips to Wisconsin with his officers.

In 2000, Elmer DeDecker, 75, turned over the position of club secretary-treasurer to Kim Potier Davis. DeDecker had held the office for 23 years and was a member of the club since it began in 1960. In 2008, the position was split and Barb Chisholm took over the duties of Secretary. Kim remained as treasurer and newsletter editor, and continues to coordinate the biennial exchange visits.

Many changes take place over the years but the dedication and commitment by our officers remains constant. Present officers are James Lampereur, President; Allen Alexander, Vice President; Barb Chisholm, Secretary; and Kim Potier Davis, Treasurer/Newsletter Editor. Treasurer's are Bertha Villers, Randy Bouche, and Barb Goral Lardinois.



OUR BELGIAN FOREFATHERS



Peninsula Belgian-American Club – the “Belgian Club”

The Peninsula Belgian-American Club was initially formed in 1964 and reorganized in 1968. Officers for the newly formed club were Harry Chaudoir, President; Austin Allard, Vice President; Laurence Chaudoir, Secretary; and Leonard Lampereur, Treasurer. The club began their first year with 12 to 20 members with the purpose of honoring their forefathers, to salute their efforts and recreate that era in history when good fellowship was prime, to promote social and charitable functions, and to communicate and assist all incorporated Belgian Clubs that included Canada and Belgium. In 1969, George Baudhuin donated \$4,000 to the Peninsula Belgian American Club to pay the cost of moving the old St Mary of the Snows schoolhouse a short distance to its present location and to cover a few basic repairs.

In 1972, the Belgian Club began exchange trips between Belgium and Wisconsin, working with Lucien Leonard and the Wisconsin-Wallonie Society. In alternating years, as many as 200 people from one side of the Atlantic visited their cousins on the other. Exchange trips continue to this day, though not as frequently. The relationships and common interest between Belgium and Wisconsin continues to flourish because of the foresight of this organization.

The “Belgian Club” remains active nearly 60 years after its initial founding. The club and its members played an important role as the forerunner to the Belgian Heritage Center by maintaining the former St. Mary of the Snows parochial school/convent and preserving Belgian culture for decades. Several of the founding members of the Belgian Club and/or their children were involved in the efforts to organize the Belgian Heritage Center and purchase the St. Mary of the Snows church.

Pictured:
Harry
Chaudoir,
Irene
Counard,
Francoise
Lempereur of
Namur,
Belgium, and
Leonard
Lampereur
with PBAC
members.
Francoise
helped plan a
1974 trip.

Information
courtesy of
PBAC
website;
photo
courtesy
Algoma
Record-
Herald



for more about Our Belgian Forefathers, visit the FEATURED tab at BelgianHeritageCenter.org